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THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH IN WILLIAMSBURGH.

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AN

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED

ON

SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 4, 1866,

BY

ELBERT S. PORTER, PASTOR.

—••—  
Published by the Consistory.  
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NEW YORK:  
BAKER & GODWIN, PRINTERS,  
PRINTING-HOUSE SQUARE,  
1866.

Pastor,

ELBERT S. PORTER.

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Consistory.

Elders.

WILLIAM FERRIS,  
DANIEL GODWIN,  
J. S. BURR,  
WILLIAM J. SCOTT,  
JAS. M. COPPERNOLL.

Deacons.

WILLIAM BUNDICK,  
ELISHA WEST,  
GARRET HANSON,  
C. C. BARNES,  
THOMAS SMITH.

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Building Committee.

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J. S. BURR,  
J. M. COPPERNOLL,  
W. J. SCOTT,  
CORNELIUS JOHNSON.

# SERMON.

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II. THESSALONIANS, chap. 1, verse 3. — “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.”

JUST about midway between the Adriatic and the Hellespont, on the shore of the Thermaic gulf, once stood in beauty, and still in faded splendor stands, the Thessalonica of the Scripture narrative. The date of its foundation is hidden among the uncertainties of a remote antiquity. Its earliest name was Therma. There Xerxes rested for a time, while his immense and motley host was marching to the expected conquest of Greece. When Alexander, the Thunderbolt of Macedonia, began his martial career, the name of his sister Thessalonica was given to the ancient Therma. Its names, its fortunes, and its history—all have ever since received the attention of commerce, literature and religion. To it Cicero resorted when the violence of party factions drove the noblest Romans into exile. There Mark Antony and Octavius Augustus met to take counsel after they had defeated the republican army at



Phillipi. For a few centuries it was the commercial metropolis of the Levant, and gathered to its treasure-houses the wealth of Asia, Africa, and Europe. It continued to be a place of great magnitude long after Constantinople had been founded upon the partial ruins of the ancient Byzantium. Its present name is Saloniki, and it still has a population of nearly 100,000 souls, composed of Jews, Franks, Greeks, and Turks.

The blessed Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ was first published in Europe at Phillipi. There Paul and Silas were arrested, thrown into prison, and delivered by a Divine interposition. Passing thence through Appolonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there were many Jews and a Synagogue. For three consecutive Sabbaths Paul preached in that synagogue. He proved from the Jewish Bible that Messiah must be put to death and rise again, and that all the law and all the prophets were fulfilled in Christ. Some Jews and many Greeks believed, and a Christian Church was there organized. It became at once the source of a widely-diffused Christian influence. Paul and Silas, driven away from Thessalonica, retired to Berea, and thence to Athens. But Timothy—the amiable, earnest, and faithful Timothy—was sent back to comfort and instruct the Thessalonian converts. Both the Epistles of Paul addressed to them appear to have been written at Corinth, and not long after the church at Thessalonica had been established. Notwithstanding the prevalence of certain errors of interpretation into which these Christians had unintentionally fallen, still they seem to have had the best graces of character—faith, hope and



charity. Exposed to taunts and jeers, threatened with violence, and beset daily by the fanatical rage of malicious Jews and licentious Pagans, they nevertheless conducted themselves so as to draw forth the admiration and praise of the Apostle. He says that he took a special pleasure in holding up their example of constancy and brotherly love in all the churches. If one should carefully analyze the contents of the two letters written by apostolic hands to the church at Thessalonica, he would discover that having received the gospel they loved it, despite all tribulations endured for its sake; that, at the outset, being but imperfectly instructed, they had nevertheless a holy practice which led them to grow in understanding of the Scriptures; and that, as a church they were characterized by a truly apostolic zeal, which impelled them to abound in good works, to sympathize with their fellow-christians generally, and to give money liberally to aid in sending the gospel to regions beyond themselves. No higher praise can be bestowed upon a church that what is contained in our text: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because, that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds."

Faith growing, and charity abounding among its entire membership are the characteristics of the very highest style of a church. Whatever else it may have, without these graces it were poor, and with these it is rich, no matter what else for the time being it may lack. For where faith and charity are, there will be heart and purpose and unity and the favor of God.

Not claiming any measure of apostolic discernment still I have chosen this text by design as the rightful index to the final meaning of this discourse. While flattering lips are an abomination, yet it is true that where praise is deserved it should be generously accorded. Conscious personal partialities must of course soften the atmosphere through which a critical eye exercises its vision, but on the other hand a long series of consistent testimonies, running only in one direction, deserves to be trusted. Even the most petulant and querulous temper would hardly dare to challenge such authority.

As a natural foundation to this sermon, which is intended to be mainly historical, I shall briefly set in order before you some facts respecting the earliest establishment of the Reformed Dutch Church on Long Island. These facts will serve, I think, to exhibit something of the sturdy life and healthful growth which have distinguished the portion of our denomination located in this insular region.

In 1664, when English superseded Dutch rule, there were in what is now New York about one thousand six hundred inhabitants, and throughout the colony of New Amsterdam *ten thousand*. Among these people, in town and country, there were five organized churches; viz.: the Collegiate in New York; one at Albany; another at Kingston, Ulster County; a fourth at Bergen, N. J.; and the fifth at Midwout or Flatbush. With the termination of the Dutch authority, emigration from Holland almost entirely ceased, and as a consequence the growth of the Reformed Church from that cause

alone was retarded. But there were other causes. The English, in the time of Fletcher, undertook to establish the Episcopal Church by law, and to this end imposed a tax on all dissenters. Political influence, also, was steadily exerted to discourage the Presbyterians and the Independents, and to favor the growth of the Prelatical schemes. But more than all other causes combined, the continued use of the Dutch language in the pulpits of the Reformed Church for an entire century, not only retarded its progress, but the wonder is that it did not destroy it as a distinct body. May it not be hoped that this generation will take warning from the errors of its ancestors, and correct the present improper title of the Church by simply accepting its just, historical designation, which is that of *The Reformed Church* of North America? This question is now before the people of the denomination. The General Synod, at its last session, appointed an able committee to report upon the matter; and that report is to be presented next year for legislative action.

The Church in its infancy suffered during one hundred years through the grave mistake of insisting upon the use of a foreign *tongue* in its public services. It has suffered another hundred years, during its adolescence, from its foreign *name*. Surely we may expect that at the beginning of its third century, having come to years of manhood and of wholesome vigor, it will put away weak and childish prejudices, and be content with a title to which it has a just right, and which is as catholic in meaning as the gospel on one hand or the wants of the world on the other. Our American life is

patient and forbearing, but because it is American and not English, or French, or Scotch, or Dutch, it must desire to be rid of foreign national designations,\* which have little power for good, and a prodigious capability for mischief. So many, if not the majority, of our pastors and influential laymen think, and for this reason another, and I trust a successful, effort is under way to rectify the title of the Reformed Dutch Church. If there be those who love it for no higher or better or more Christian reason than that it carries the word *Dutch* as a memento of the past, they will oppose the intended correction, and be grieved if it shall be accomplished. But those who love the Church for the truth it maintains, for the spirit it inculcates, for the order it upholds, for its freedom from straight-laced ritualism on one hand and indefinite license on the other—who love it for its fidelity to Christ's cross and crown, for its glorious history, and its tolerant and its charitable temper—who love it for its sacrifices in behalf of civil and religious liberty, and its zeal in defending the very Gibraltar of Protestant Faith—a Free Bible—such will love it all the more when they see its last shackle removed and its every limb at liberty to go forward with glad alacrity to do the work of our Lord.

The Dutch Churches on Long Island were founded in the following order: The one at Flatbush in 1654. Its first minister was John Theodore Polhemus, some of whose descendants are well-known residents of this county at this day, and who by their private and public virtues honor the name of their great ancestor. The first church in Brooklyn was organized in the year 1660, and its first



pastor was Henry Selyns, a devout and eloquent minister of the Word. The next in order was the church at Jamaica, founded in 1702. The church of Bushwick was organized in 1709; that of Newtown in 1731; and that of Gravesend in 1765. These were the six original churches of the Island,—the elder being over two hundred years old, and the younger of the group a little over one hundred. When the first General Convention of our churches was called to meet in New York, in the year 1771, it appears on the records that there were but two ministers then serving these churches. These were John Caspar Rubbel and Ulpian Van Sinderin. These particulars will aid in tracing the subsequent progress of our denomination hereabouts, and this we shall now proceed to do.

In the first year of the present century Brooklyn contained only 3,298 inhabitants. In 1834 it was erected into a city, and its population then numbered a few over 24,000. It had then—thirty-two years ago—but one church of our order. Since some will insist upon being ignorant enough to say, without any shame of conscious falsehood, that the Reformed Dutch Church is slow and unprogressive, it will be well to note from what follows that this very slow church has grown within the period named more rapidly than that of any other of the Presbyterian family. At the present time we have in the Western District eight, and in the Eastern District seven, being fifteen in all. There are not so many as there ought to be. Yet as there were only three in 1830, viz., the First of Brooklyn, the First of Bushwick, and the First of Williamsburgh—the last in

its very infancy—we cannot help feeling grateful that these three have multiplied five-fold in number, and twenty-fold in resources and influence.

In the year 1817, a ferry was established between the foot of Grand Street, New York, and the foot of what is now Grand Street, Williamsburgh. Prior to that period the inhabitants along these shores reached the city across the river by sail or paddle-boats. The ferry just named soon contributed to the establishment of a considerable settlement along the shore, from Grand to North Second Street, through which ran the turnpike to Newtown. During the period of ten years that settlement increased to a magnitude which justified its incorporation under a village charter, which was done in 1827, when its population amounted to about *fifteen hundred*.

At that date, the shore from the Wallabout Bay to Newtown Creek was dotted with comfortable farm-houses, occupied by the Johnsons, the Remsens, the Boeruns, the Duboises, the Berrys, the Meseroles, the Millers, the Morrels, the Devoes, and beyond Bushwick Creek by several branches of the Meserole family. What a change has come over all this once peaceful and fertile agricultural space within the last forty years! Instead of the fathers are the children. One can picture to himself what must have been the almost Arcadian beauty that environed the rural abodes of these forefathers of our city. The picture must be seen, however, by the imagination, if seen at all. There are a few here, and but a few, who as children sported in the free waters at the river's brink, or played at summer-tide beneath the

venerable trees which patriarchial hands had planted. Yet of the mighty process of change here, through nearly half the period named, I have been a personal spectator, together with a multitude beside.

Forty years ago, one single house of worship accommodated all the church-going people of this District, and that was the old house of the older Bushwick church. But there began to be need for more room for worship on the Sabbath-day. To provide this, the project of establishing a chapel, westward of the old church, was started and entertained by some at least of the members of the Bushwick organization. For a little while difficulties with respect to location and other matters delayed the execution of the proposed undertaking. At length, however, on the 28th day of September, in the year of our Lord 1828, the corner-stone of this edifice was laid. The Magazine of the Dutch Church for that year says: "Dr. Brodhead of New York, and the Rev. Messrs. Jacob Schoonmaker of Jamaica, and S. H. Meeker, pastor of the Congregation, were present, and officiated on the occasion. The ceremony of laying the corner-stone was performed by Mr. John A. Mese-  
role, a sharer in the toils of the Revolution, and for many years actively engaged in the cause of Christianity, and who, in pious regard for the interests of our Reformed Zion, deposited a handsome donation to aid in the erection of their house of worship to the living God." The corner-stone contains the Holy Bible and the Confession of the Faith of the Church.

In the following year, 1829, on the 26th day of July, this house was dedicated to the service of the Triune



God. The sermon was preached by Dr. Brodhead, from II. Cor., chap. 7, verse 16, "I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things."

So soon as this edifice was under way, the congregation at Bushwick resolved also to erect a new house of worship, which was finished and dedicated on the 20th of September, 1829. The congregation here then wished to be organized into a separate church, and this was done by the Classis of Long Island on the first Sabbath of November, 1829. The sermon on the occasion was preached by the Rev. Dr. Schoonmaker of Jamaica, who ordained Abraham Meserole and Abraham Boerum as elders.

This act of the Classis was not taken kindly by the church of Bushwick. Indeed, so displeased were the authorities of that church that they refused to hold farther ecclesiastical intercourse with the Classis of Long Island. Accordingly the Bushwick Church was joined to the South Classis of New York, in which connection it has ever since remained. There is however, I am sure, no improper feeling now in existence, which needs to be gratified by the continued separation of this church from most friendly intercourse with its sisters of the same family.

Immediately after its organization, this church received to its service the Rev. James Demarest, who, during the preceding August, had been graduated from our Theological Seminary at New Brunswick. For the first six months he served in the capacity of a Missionary, and was supported in part during that time by the Board of Domestic Missions. On the first Sabbath of his

labors here he preached to sixteen people, on the second to eighteen, and on the third to twenty-four. It is instructive to look back at this beginning. It was in a sense a day of small things. But a handful of the incorruptible seed of the Gospel, fertilized by Divine grace, can be made to wave like the cedars of Lebanon in their stately majesty. Knowing, as we now do, how steadfastly this church has grown in faith and abounded in charity; how it became, in after years, a joyful mother of children; how it has helped plant other churches, and added to the ranks of the ministry, and sent forth its influence even to the uttermost parts of the earth—it seems almost wonderful in our eyes that from so feeble a beginning it should have come to a history so instructive and encouraging.

In tracing the career of the church, some note must be taken of the progress of the community here, and this may be shortly done.

When this building was opened for Divine worship, it stood in fact remote from the village, which was forming around and above the foot of Grand Street. Fourth Street then was but a farmer's lane, rough, uneven with boulders, and studded here and there with stumps or with trees of the original forest. Flagged sidewalks and pavements as yet there were none. The church, in its surroundings, was made a sort of John the Baptist, crying, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Population, however, rapidly increased. In 1835 the inhabitants numbered but 3,328; in 1840, 5,095; in 1845, 11,328.

The Rev. Mr. Demarest, having labored here with

fidelity and success for a period of nine years and nine months, resigned, and the pastorate was next filled by the Rev. William Howard Van Doren. During his ministry here the church and congregation experienced many changes, some prosperous and some adverse. There were seasons of revival enjoyed, when many entered into covenant with God. But there had been gathered into the congregation some who retained special personal preferences for other church organizations. So long as they were without sufficient force to form and sustain separate churches they remained to worship here. So it happened that for years Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians, and Congregationalists, very cordially joined together in these courts in the sacred services of the Sabbath-day. At length a number withdrew and organized the First Presbyterian Church. Not long afterward that was divided, a part becoming Old School and the other part remaining in connection with the New. This withdrawal weakened the congregation here, and many other causes, such as commercial panics, social changes, and the comparative inability of a somewhat sparse population to sustain the several churches which had sprung up—all combined to keep this church and congregation in a condition neither healthful nor vigorous. At the expiration of the first half of its existence it had a house of worship antique in style, unattractive both internally and externally, and was in debt for the whole cost of its lecture-room, besides owing about five thousand dollars more to individuals who had made advances for its support. At length, toward the close of 1848, measures were taken

by Nicholas Wyckoff, Jonathan S. Burr, William Ferris, Samuel Greves, and others—some of whom were and some not of the Consistory—to repair, modernize and beautify this edifice. They were greatly encouraged at the outset by the generosity of Messrs. Abraham Meserole and Abraham Boerum, each of whom relinquished a considerable claim held by them at that time upon the church. In the Spring of 1849 the improvements were completed. These consisted of an addition of twelve feet to the front of the building, with a tower and handsome spire, the substitution of new for old pews, together with sundry decorations of the interior. Early in the Spring of that year the Rev. Mr. Van Doren resigned, and for some months the Rev. Job Halsey served here as a stated supply.

In October, 1849, by a vote of the congregation, the Consistory were authorized to make a call upon your present pastor. Their action was embodied in a resolution and transmitted to him for consideration. The regular call bears date November 13th. It is in the handwriting of the late Dr. Schoonmaker, who seems to have been a special friend and adviser of this church, from its beginning to the time of his death. My installation took place on the third Sabbath of December, on which occasion Dr. Schoonmaker preached the sermon, and the Rev. John Ward of Greenpoint addressed the pastor and people. According to the stipulations of the Consistory, my call took effect on the 1st of November, so that, technically, to-day is the seventeenth anniversary of my pastorate here, and exactly completes the thirty-seventh year of the church,



inasmuch as it was organized on the first Sabbath of November, 1829.

In what follows I shall be obliged to speak of the growth, activity and influence of this church, but in so doing I trust that no one will be ungenerous enough to accuse me of indulging in a weak and foolish personal vanity. Believing that the church itself is entitled to a full share of such praise as is accorded to those who do well, I shall not hesitate to speak in truthful and becoming terms of a communion whose order, steadfastness, and fidelity to Christ, I have witnessed with ever-increasing satisfaction and pleasure. Looking back to the point of time when first I became your minister, and contrasting what was then with what is now, I cannot fail to see abundant proofs that the Lord has been with you and prospered your undertakings. There are many here who cannot draw encouragement from such a view, because they have not been long enough here to observe the progress of affairs, whether ecclesiastical or municipal. They may be interested in the rehearsal which shall now follow.

It may be well questioned whether another city in the United States has grown so rapidly as this has in population. The figures are instructive: In 1845, there were 11,328 inhabitants. In 1850, there were 30,780—very nearly a three-fold increase in five years. On the 1st of January, 1852, Williamsburgh became a city; and on the 1st of January, 1855, it was consolidated with Brooklyn and Bushwick, under one charter. At the date of its consolidation, Williamsburgh had a population of about 50,000, and Brooklyn about 120,000.

The U. S. Census of 1860 places the aggregate population of the consolidated city at 206,661, and makes its ratio of increase to have been a little over 175 per cent. The Eastern District, bounded by Flushing Avenue on the south, and Newtown Creek on the north, is believed to contain at the present time not less than *one hundred thousand* people. The improvements in affairs of all kinds here have been very great. In the beginning of 1850, Grand Street, Fourth, South Fourth, South Seventh, and First Streets, along the river, were the only streets here that were both paved and flagged. South Seventh Street, leading to the main ferry, had only a few buildings on its north side; part of an orchard still fronted on the street, and a single breadth of flagging-stone accommodated pedestrians. Fourth Street was occupied almost exclusively by private dwellings. The streets were unlighted by night, save only when the moon relieved their darkness. Since then every one of our local secular institutions have been established, such as banks, markets, libraries, and associations for public beneficence. The churches were few and their membership not large, consequently each church was compelled to struggle as it were with a sea of difficulties. At the beginning of 1850, the church edifices in this district were only *eight* in number. There are now, I believe, *fifty-two*; being very nearly a seven-fold increase in sixteen years. There is no better index than this to the general character and condition of a community. True, some of these many churches are still weak, but they have been planted, and will, we trust, all thrive and prosper. Every successive

year of my residence here I have noticed a sure and solid improvement in every element comprising what is styled the public welfare. Material wealth has increased, educational institutions are established, and the common agencies of Religion have been employed with ever-augmenting measures of success. Those who are afflicted with tempers which can never find sunshine anywhere, or who think that fault-finding is the chief end of man, may nurse their unhappiness by pointing out still existing deficiencies in our social, civil, and religious organizations. But if one will take the past fifteen years of the history of this portion of the city as a visible proof of what may be done even in Williamsburgh, he may possibly consent to say that the next fifteen years may yield an equal reward to our people here. Fifteen years hence, and Fourth Street will be lined with stores from one end to the other. A broad avenue will extend from the foot of South Seventh Street, along which the tide of travel will roll as it now does through Fulton Avenue. Fifteen years hence, and property will be worth more in this Thirteenth Ward than it will then be on Brooklyn Heights. The merchants of New York, having a short, easy, and direct access to Division Avenue Ferry, by four city railways in New York leading through the very commercial vitals of the metropolis, will come hither in crowds to tear down our old buildings and erect new. Fifteen years hence, and New York will be still more a foreign city than it now is, and relatively a larger number of its merchants than at present will have their residences outside of its limits. A proper public spirit, forecast-



ing future events, may well consider the inevitable tendency of population, and prepare the way for a large augmentation of the community here.

I am aware that it is the fashion of a few to declaim against the character of this place. Yet, in spite of all their declamations, the place grows and thrives, Its local business increases, wealth accumulated in New York is expended here, and population advances. True, we are destitute of theaters, of magnificent palaces of sin, and of many other establishments of evil, ever ablaze as with the fires of Hell. But we can live here better without the demoralizing agencies of a corrupt civilization than we could with them. Let it be the care of the people to provide churches and schools and libraries, to sustain institutions of charity and of philanthropy; let them strive to make the community increasingly intelligent and virtuous and enterprising; let those who own property favor every wise measure designed to improve the same, and time and patience will bring them satisfying rewards. It was not until about two years prior to the commencement of the war that this place came into the possession of full facilities to render it attractive for residence. During the war, and since, there have been hindrances. But population has exceeded accommodations, and dwellings must go up, no matter what their cost.

There are, I am sure, the soundest reasons for thinking that our future as a community will be, in all respects, brighter than our past has been. It will be safe to act on this conviction. The past fifteen years

have completely revolutionized affairs here, and the next fifteen will roll on the wheels of improvement with accelerated pace. We, of course, grieve to lose the personal presence and society, now and then, of some of our most worthy citizens. But such losses are inevitable, because controlled by laws of liberty, which belong to the urgent currents of American society—laws which operate for our good as well as for our occasional injury.

I shall now draw toward my conclusion by briefly enumerating what seem to me to have been characteristics of this church during my acquaintance with it:

1. It has never been demonstrative, in the sense of being *sensational*. It has desired and sought a steady, substantial growth on the good soil of divine Truth. And what it has thus sought it has obtained. There have been in it no spasmodic fits of unwholesome exertion, and there have been no consequent periods of lassitude and weariness and decay of power. This characteristic has secured an unusual amount of stability to the elements composing the congregation. In a community like this, where fickleness and change are active as the tides, we have felt them here but slightly. I have been surprised and gratified on running over our records to find how large a proportion of this congregation has been here almost from the beginning of my ministry in this church, or during the larger part of it. True, death and the constraints of Providence have taken many from us. Yet all over the floor of this sanctuary are seated families or parts of families who

have occupied almost the same places for a series of many years. Many even of those who have removed hence have left their hearts with us, and some have come back again to gladden us by their presence and to edify us by their pious labors. Such steady and uniform continuance in well-doing as has characterized the life of this church is in itself the best evidence of the constant presence of the Holy Spirit among you.

2. It has shown a true Christian liberality. The Reformed Dutch Church is not sectarian or bigoted or selfishly exclusive. It neither believes in nor teaches that any separating and excising shibboleth is to be magnified above the name of Jesus. Its motto is, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all, charity." Its spirit and temper are therefore ruled by its conviction that the test of a true church is not to be found in the accident of an external form, nor in the groove of a rigid uniformity of government. They who are Christ's compose the universal Church, which is his body. And to love and cherish and rejoice in the welfare of all those whom Christ loves would seem to be an elementary part of practical Christianity; on the other hand, selfishness is never more odious, nor pride more detestable, than when they claim the possession of the Divine Warrant as a license to their indulgence. When man has embodied his depraved passions into a religious creed, he becomes the victim of the most wicked of all forms of idolatry. Therefore our Denomination has protested always against the intolerance

and illiberality of every system of religious training which denies Christ by denying his people.

You have not neglected to provide for your own ecclesiastical household, nor have you refused to extend the hand of friendship and of help to those of other faiths than your own. You have suffered no real loss by this most Christian course of conduct, and will not. And if now others shall in any measure do by you as you have done by them, you will be reaping as you have sown.

The liberal spirit which has been cultivated here toward sister denominations has also exhibited itself in specific forms toward younger congregations of our own order. In 1850, this was the only Dutch Church in this portion of the city; now there are five others, every one of which you have aided by your sympathies, your prayers, and your money. As they have prospered, you have rejoiced; and while some of them have been growing strong, you have not become weak nor disheartened on beholding their successes.

Nor have you been wanting in the grace of giving of your substance for the support of the institutions of religion. For the endowment of our College and our Seminary; for the support of our Church Boards; for maintaining your Sabbath schools, which are now three in number; and for other objects—you have contributed with a promptitude and frequency wholly inconsistent with the notion of illiberality.

3. This has been a fruitful Church. In 1848, twenty-three members were dismissed by you to form



the Church at Greenpoint. In 1851, several were dismissed to aid in the organization of the South Bushwick Church; and for three consecutive years you contributed directly to the support of its pastor, the Rev. J. S. Himrod. In 1854, you dismissed members to organize the Lee Avenue Church; gave its school at the beginning a library; furnished a superintendent, with more than a dozen teachers; and for two years you also contributed to the salary of its pastor, Rev. Mr. Halloway. In 1854, the spire of this church was prostrated by a tornado, and while contemplating repairs needed, you resolved to enlarge this edifice. The building was carried to the rear line of the lots, and forty-four new pews placed in the edifice. Other improvements were made at a cost of about \$5,000 for all. Eleven years ago the Mission School in Ninth Street was established, and has been maintained to this day, in great vigor and efficiency, at an expense of never less than \$500 per annum. In 1858, a plan was arranged for the purchase of the North Sixth Street Church, into which many members of this congregation entered heartily. The price was fixed at \$6,000. An application was made to the Consistory of the Collegiate Church for aid to the amount of \$1,500. The application was granted by that Consistory upon condition that \$1,500 should be raised here. We secured \$2,500 here, and I then went to New York to draw the amount there pledged. I found a technical error in the wording of the resolution of the Collegiate Consistory, which had to be rectified. To secure this, I visited personally a majority of the members of that Consistory, who said

the rectification should be made. But when that Consistory met, one vote prevented the rectification, and we failed to secure the property in North Sixth Street. My own private loss in that failure was over \$400, but that was the least. We were obliged to turn a Sabbath school of nearly three hundred children into the street, and worse than all, the Consistory of this Church and its Pastor were severely blamed by excellent and worthy members of the Church and congregation for not having accomplished an impossibility. I do not make this disclosure now in any spirit of unkindness, but simply because I believe that, at this late day, when all passions are cooled, the plain and simple truth respecting that matter should be known. We meant well and did well, but one sinner can destroy much good, and especially if he be a member of a body where nothing can be done except by a unanimous vote. My wish was to see a Dutch Reformed Church in every section of this district, and but for one adverse vote in New York that wish would have been gratified. Last year it was proposed to take the German Evangelical Church in Union Avenue under the care of the North Classis of Long Island. It had a floating debt of \$800 which had to be liquidated. The Classis assumed the debt, and this Church bore its full share of that amount. Mr. William Ferris has charge of the Sabbath school there, and I heartily wish that he may receive additional assistance, in books and teachers, for the supply of that very interesting and promising field of Christian labor.

4. This has been an united Church. You have sent forth colonies, larger or smaller; but during the present pastorate there have been no secessions, no parties, no quarrels, and no bone of contention. Even on the question of removal to another location we have had no disputes nor controversies. Eight years ago the necessity of sooner or later removing from this place began to be foreseen and talked of. Every month almost the conviction grew that some steps should be taken to provide this congregation with a better edifice, in a more advantageous position. At length, in 1860, a contract was made for the purchase of a site. The war and its confusions arrested plans at that point. Three years ago, the congregation, at a public meeting regularly called, directed the Consistory to sell this property. For three years the Consistory tried to find some purchaser who would not convert the property to common secular uses. At length, in July last, what the congregation had ordered was done, and this property was disposed of, on conditions mutually advantageous to buyer and seller. I will not say that, from the beginning, there have been no differences of opinion respecting methods of procedure. But I will say, that even in this grave and important undertaking, the Consistory have taken no steps save by consent of its every member, and have concluded upon no action other than the congregation, in regular form, sanctioned by their vote. May I not hope that our unanimity in the past will continue unbroken, and that we may go forward in our most important work as with one hand and one heart.



Thus far I have spoken chiefly in a historic way. The external record of this church has been surveyed to show how the Good Father has loved and helped his children here.

But no words can tell what have been the nature or the number of the ministries of grace received by the worshipers in this sanctuary from Him, who not only meets with, but abides in, the assemblies of His saints. Here a multitude have been introduced into the Kingdom. Here joy has been found by the mourner; strength by the feeble; and the ripening bloom of holy culture has gathered upon the hearts of those who have the fruits of the Spirit. I do not propose on this really tender occasion to make any applications to the fountains of sympathy for a contribution of regretful tears. Together we have all loved these gates of Zion. Here we have been united as a family, united by all the sacred ties of spiritual kinship. Here we have heard the sound, above all others the sweetest, which has called us into the inward fellowship, which nor time nor change nor even death can destroy. Here, seated in heavenly places, we have had visions of the glorious company above; of the ransomed congregation; of the white robed and the worthy; of the Throne and the King in his beauty. Often this place has been lighted by the sacred passions of the hour up to the moment of Transfiguration, and we have seen no man, "save Jesus only." It would be strange, indeed, should our natures refuse to cherish sentiments of regard, even for the material structure which has stood as sentinel over our spiritual festivals.

But a *living* church can never consent to entomb itself voluntarily from mere devotion to the perishable. Long ago you outgrew this edifice. It has been decaying while you have increased in capacity to work. No longer is it adequate to your wants, and indeed has not been for years past. You propose, therefore, to remove hence, not to gratify pride or foster secular ambition, but that you may do the will of your Master and edify yourselves, your children, and the community here.

If there be some who shall feel a pang of sorrow in taking a farewell of this sanctuary; I can respect and share that sorrow. This desk has long been the shrine of my heart. After a short experience in the ministry elsewhere, I came hither seventeen years ago, "to offer myself as a sacrifice in the service of your faith." Our union was legally formed and sanctified by secret vows of mutual fidelity. On neither side has there been distrust or suspicion to impair our confidence. The bond of union has been strengthened and brightened through successive years. And therefore I can say with perfect truthfulness, that to stand here before this congregation, in the hours of Sabbath service, and proclaim the glorious gospel, has been not so much a duty or a labor as an ever-increasing delight.

Though head, and heart, and hand—all the strength of whatever sort God has been pleased to give me—have been taxed and tasked, and often strained, to bear a double burden; while duty to the denomination we love has exacted with fatal and unintermitted regularity the performance of much work for the columns of the weekly press, still you are my witnesses that I have never

neglected the first and in a superior sense the superior claims of this desk. And now, after having ministered many years to one people, my satisfaction is to know that I have faithfully tried, in simplicity and Godly sincerity, to speak to them according to the oracles of Truth. Your approbation has been an encouragement too great for words to express. And the proofs received of your love have been too many to permit me to think they have been offered except in testimony of your appreciation of the truths it has been my study to set forth.

We shall go out to build another sanctuary. Let us all devoutly pray that our faith and charity may abound yet more and more, and that God may be pleased to give us success, and establish the work of our hands. The site secured for the future structure is believed to be as desirable as any in this portion of the city. It consists now of seven lots, for which full payment has been made, so that they are entirely clear of incumbrance. Our plans will quickly be ready, and when adopted, measures will at once be taken to prosecute the work before us. Meanwhile we shall enjoy the hospitality of a sister church, where our presence will be welcome, and, I doubt not, our concord unbroken. Preserving distinct as we shall our family meetings for prayer and the study of the Scriptures, I fervently trust that we may continue as united in the future as we have been in the past, and that with one heart and one purpose we may go forward, asking the Good Shepherd daily to show us the way. Amen.

## APPENDIX A.



The present membership of the Church is officially reported to be three hundred and seventy-six.

It has three Sabbath Schools under its care.

The Home School numbers three hundred scholars, with an average attendance of two hundred. James M. Coppernoll, Superintendent.

The Ninth Street Mission School numbers three hundred and twenty-five, with an average attendance of about two hundred. Col. J. V. Meserole, Superintendent.

The Union Avenue School, W. Ferris, Superintendent, belongs to the German Evangelical Church, and has a session for studies in English every Sabbath afternoon.

## APPENDIX B.

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In the evening, services were held in the church, which were conducted by Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, of the Congregational Church, Rev. James Demarest, M. D., the first pastor of the Congregation, and Rev. Dr. Porter.

Rev. Mr. Demarest spoke of the Manifestations of God in History, and of his special dealings with the Fourth Street Reformed Dutch Church during its early years.

Dr. Porter delivered an address on the Progress of the several Religious Denominations in Brooklyn, E. D.

The following statistics were given: Reformed Dutch Churches, 7. Methodist, 9. Episcopal, 7. Presbyterian (O.S.), 5. New School, 1. United Presbyterian, 1. Baptist, 7. Congregational, 1. Roman Catholic, 4. Colored Churches, 3. Lutheran, 3. Protestant Methodist, 3. Mission Church, 1. Universalist, 1. Swedenborgian, 1.











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